

REMARKS

Claims 20-39 are pending and rejected in this application. Claims 20 and 30 are amended hereby.

The Examiner objected to the specification relative to the identification of the application as a national stage application of a PCT filing. Preliminarily, Applicants note that the requirement specified by the Examiner is present for a §120 continuation, but is not believed to be present for a §371 national stage application. Nonetheless, to advance prosecution of this case, Applicants have amended the specification as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Specification is now in allowable form.

Responsive to the Examiner's objection to the Specification relative to the features of claims 29 and 36, relative to claim 29, Applicants respectfully traverse the objection. Applicants would draw the Examiner's attention to the paragraph starting at line 6 of page 4 wherein the further limitations of claim 29 are disclosed. Relative to claim 36 the Applicants have amended the paragraph that starts at line 6, page 6 to include a suction roll. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Specification is now in allowable form.

Responsive to the rejection of claims 20-25, 30-33, 36 and 39 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,372,090 (Laapotti), Applicants have amended claims 20 and 30 and submit that claims 20-25, 30-33, 36 and 29 are now in condition for allowance.

Laapoti discloses a method and apparatus for handling paper or cardboard webs (Figs. 1-4) including felt 1 on which web 12 enters the apparatus. A nip is formed between press shoe 3 and backing roll 4. Water is removed from the web at the pressing nip and web 12 is transferred to the surface of transfer belt 2. Downstream of transfer belt 2 there is arranged a transfer felt 5 that

is pressed on transfer belt 2 with section roll 6. The negative pressure produced through air permeable felt 5 attaches web 12 by suction to felt 5. Transfer felt 6 transfers web 12 to a drying felt 8 (column 3, lines 23-35). Downstream of first drying unit 9 is a first unit for applying a treating agent to the surface of web 12 (column 3, lines 45-48). After the first side of web 12 is coated, web 12 is transferred, in a supported manner, to an impingement drying phase and after that to be coated on the other side of web 12 using the same method. Following the second coating phase there is another impingement drying unit, or units, and after that there may be one or more ordinary cylinder drying units (column 6, lines 20-27).

In contrast claim 20, as amended, recites in part:

supporting the material web with an extensible support surface, substantially without free draw, after said routing step.

(Emphasis added). Applicants submit that such an invention is neither taught, disclosed nor suggested by Laapoti or any of the other cited references, alone or in combination, and includes distinct advantages thereover.

Laapoti discloses a method for transferring web 12 in a supported manner to an impingement drying phase. Laapoti discloses that the transport of a web through the use of transfer felts to a drying cylinder. There is no disclosure indicating any sort of extensible adjustment or change in any of the support belts or felts of Laapoti. Applicants' invention has an extensible support feature and a tensioning device to ensure that the support feature is held at a constant tension. Therefore, Laapoti and any of the other cited references, alone or in combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest the step of supporting the material web with an extensible support surface, substantially without free draw after a routing step, as recited in claim 20.

An advantage of Applicants' invention is that the support for the material web can be extended to minimize the free draw. For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claim 20, and claims 21-25 depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

In further contrast, claim 30 as amended, recites in part:

a continuous belt... being an extensible support dependent on said second support roll, said extensible support supporting the material web substantially without free draw.

(Emphasis added). Applicants submit the second invention is neither taught, disclosed nor suggest by Laapoti, alone or in combination, and includes distinct advantages thereover.

Laapoti discloses an apparatus that transfers web 12 in a supported manner to an impingement drying phase. The transport of the web is accomplished by the use of transfer felts to deliver the web to a drying cylinder. There is no disclosure indicating any sort of extensible support or an adjustment or change in any of the support belts or felts of Laapoti. Applicants' invention has an extensible support feature and a tensioning device to ensure that the support feature is held at a constant tension. Therefore, Laapoti and any of the other cited references alone or combination, fail to disclose, teach or suggest a continuous belt being an extensible support dependent on a second support roll, the extensible support supporting the material web substantially without free draw, as recited in claim 30.

An advantage of Applicants' invention is that the support for the material web can be extended to minimize the free draw. For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claim 30, and claims 31-33, 36 and 39 depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

Claims 27, 29, 35, 37 and 38 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laapoti. However, claims 27 and 29 depend from claim 20, and claims 35, 37 and 38 depend from claim 30, and claims 20 and 30 have been placed in condition for allowance for the reasons given above. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 27, 29, 35, 37 and 38 are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

Claim 28 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laapoti and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,228,216 (Lindsay, et al.). However, claim 28 depends from claim 20, and claim 20 has been placed in condition for allowance for the reasons given above. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 28 is now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

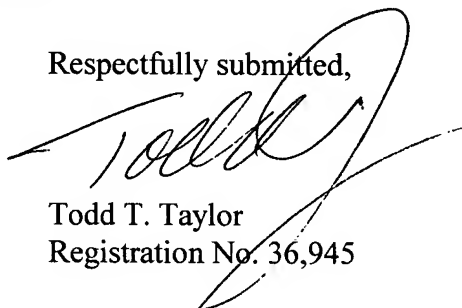
Claims 26 and 34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laapoti in further view of Japanese Patent No. 48-041007. However, claim 26 depends from claim 20 and claim 34 depends from claim 30, and claims 20 and 30 have been placed in condition for allowance for the reasons given above. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 26 and 34 are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicants have overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicants hereby conditionally petition therefor and authorizes that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd T. Taylor  
Registration No. 36,945

Attorney for Applicant

TTT6/ar

TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.  
142 S. Main Street  
P.O. Box 560  
Avilla, IN 46710  
Telephone: 260-897-3400  
Facsimile: 260-897-9300

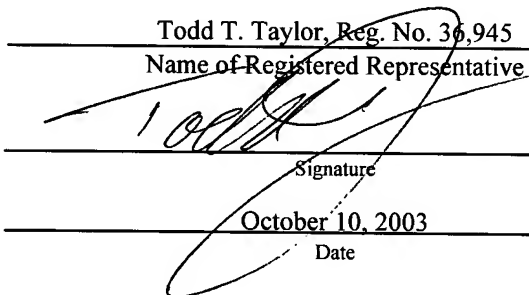
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on: October 10, 2003.

Todd T. Taylor, Reg. No. 36,945

Name of Registered Representative



Signature

October 10, 2003

Date